

Message Text

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ACTION AF-04

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 NEA-07 EUR-08 IO-06 OMB-01
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FM AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5668

INFO AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DJIBOUTI

AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY NAIROBI

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY SANA

USMISSION USUN

DIA

C O N F I D E N T I A L MOGADISCIO 2231

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1

TAGS: MOPS, SO, ET

SUBJ: OGADEN FRONT STATIC; SOMALIS PLAN NEW OFFENSIVE

REF: MOGADISCIO 2013 (NOTAL)

1. EGYPTIAN MILITARY ATTACHE COL. AHMED MAHMOUD ABDEL-HALIM
REVIEWED THE MILITARY SITUATION IN THE OGADEN FROM HIS PERS-
PECTIVE ONCE AGAIN ON DECEMBER 27. DURING HIS CONVERSATION WITH
THE DCM, HALIM SAID HE WAS CERTAIN THE SOMALIS WOULD MAKE ONE
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MORE MAJOR ATTEMPT TO TAKE HARAR. HE COULD NOT SAY WHAT THE
SOMALIS WOULD DO IF THIS EFFORT FAILED. HALIM IS THE SOURCE
OF PARAGRAPHS 2 THROUGH 4.

2. THE SITUATION IN THE HARAR DIRE DAWA AREA IS STATIC
AND HAS BEEN SO SINCE THE SOMALI NOVEMBER 14TH OFFENSIVE
LOST MOMENTUM. UNITS OF BOTH ARMIES ARE IN FIXED POSI-

TIONS. THERE IS SOME ARTILLERY FIRE, BUT OTHER THAN THAT VERY LITTLE ACTIVITY. THE SOMALIS ARE DUG IN CLOSE TO ETHIOPIAN DEFENSIVE LINES ABOUT GOREI, BABILE, AND HARAR ITSELF. THERE IS STILL A SOMALI BRIGADE OPERATING WEST OF THE HARAR DIRE DAWA ROAD BETWEEN THE TWO CITIES, BUT IT TOO IS QUIESCENT FOR THE MOMENT. SOMALI INACTIVITY RESULTS FROM SHORTAGES OF BOTH AMMUNITION AND WEAPONS. UNTIL THE SOMALIS ARE ABLE TO BRING UP FRESH STOCKS, THEY MUST REMAIN PASSIVE. SOMALI NATIONAL ARMY UNITS, HOWEVER, HAVE BEEN REENFORCED WITH NEW REPLACEMENTS SINCE THE LAST OFFENSIVE, AND UNITS ON THE HARAR DIRE DAWA FRONT ARE UP TO STRENGTH. TROOP MORALE REMAINS HIGH.

3. THE SOMALIS HAVE USED THE PRESENT INTERLUDE TO CONSTRUCT A NEW ROAD WEST OF THE PRINCIPAL JIGJIGA HARAR ROAD. THE NEW ROAD WILL ENABLE SOMALI FORCES TO BY-PASS EXISTING ETHIOPIAN STRONG POINTS AND MOUNT A DIRECT ATTACK ON HARAR FROM THE SOUTH AND WEST. AS SOON AS THE ROAD IS COMPLETED AND AMMUNITION STOCKS HAVE BEEN RESTORED THE SOMALI ARMY PLANS TO MAKE ANOTHER ATTEMPT TO TAKE HARAR. IT IS NOW IMPOSSIBLE TO SAY WHEN THIS MAY TAKE PLACE, BUT THE SOMALIS HAD ORIGINALLY WANTED TO LAUNCH ANOTHER OFFENSIVE ON DECEMBER 27. THEY CANNOT MEET THAT DEADLINE.

4. ACTIVITY IN THE CENTRAL AND SOUTHERN SECTORS OF
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THE OGADEN HAS ALSO BEEN MINIMAL SINCE MID-DECEMBER WHEN THE SOMALIS TURNED BACK AN ETHIOPIAN OFFENSIVE IN THE NEGELLI AREA. THE ATTACK COST THE ETHIOPIANS HEAVY CASUALTIES INCLUDING THE BRIGADE COMMANDER OF THE ETHIOPIAN FORCES WHO WAS KILLED IN ACTION ALONG WITH HIS STAFF. ALTHOUGH THERE ARE REGULAR SOMALI UNITS IN THE NEGELLI AREA, THE BULK OF THE FORCES THERE AND IN THE CENTER ARE WESTERN SOMALI LIBERATION FRONT (WSLF) IRREGULARS. THE FIGHTING IN THE GOBA AREA IS ESSENTIALLY UNCONVENTIONAL WARFARE WITH RAIDS AND SABOTAGE ACTIONS MORE CHARACTERISTIC THAN POSITION WARFARE.

5. THE EMBASSY HAS AN INDEPENDENT REPORT ATTRIBUTED TO A SOMALI NATIONAL ARMY INFANTRY CAPTAIN ON LEAVE FROM THE HARAR FRONT THAT MORALE OF THE SOMALI TROOPS IN THAT AREA IS EXCELLENT. THE SOMALI OFFICER REPORTEDLY SAID HE WAS SURPRISED TO FIND SOME CIVILIANS IN MOGADISCIO DISAPPOINTED WITH THE OUTCOME OF THE MID-NOVEMBER OFFENSIVE. THE TROOPS THEMSELVES, THE CAPTAIN ASSERTED, WERE CONVINCED THE BATTLE WAS GOING THEIR WAY, AND THAT THEY WOULD PREVAIL.

6. COMMENT: HALIM WAS NOT QUITE HIS USUAL DITHYRAMBIC SELF DURING THE DEC 27 MEETING. HE WAS MORE GUARDED IN HIS OUTLOOK, AND SOBER IN HIS ASSESSMENT OF SOMALI PROSPECTS THAN DURING THE REVIEW ON NOV 27. HIS GENERAL ASSESSMENT, HOWEVER, IS IN HARMONY WITH OTHER INFORMATION AVAILABLE TO THE EMBASSY, AND REPRESENTS PROBABLY AS ACCURATE A MILITARY PERSPECTIVE FROM THE SOMALI SIDE AS CAN BE OBTAINED HERE.
LOUGHRAN

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